Visual Arts

Artist Uses Scratchboard Technique As A Medium For Wildlife Renderings

Falcon's Swoop

This scratchboard drawing of a striking falcon is the work of Pia Maria del Carmen Palmer of St. Petersburg, Fla., a Spanish-American artist.

— Photo By Richard Genders

By RICHARD A. GENDERS
Written for The Citizen-Times

Some of the most difficult and tedious drawing techniques are seen in the work of St. Petersburg, Fla., Spanish-American artist Pia Maria del Carmen Palmer.

The medium is the scratchboard. It is drawing in reverse. White lines are scratched into a black background with a stylus or scratchboard tool, a razor blade or a sharp, needle-like instrument.

The scratchboard is used extensively in advertising and other commercial art presentations because of its high detail quality. Much of it resembles the fine engravings and lithographs of the last century.

Pia Palmer has used the technique as a successful medium for her drawings and renderings of wildlife.

The fine line that can be created with a single stroke of the needle-point can closely represent a single hair of the fur of an animal. It is most appropriate for simulating bird feathers.

Initially a chalk-covered board, the scratchboard is covered with solid black india ink over the specific part of the drawing to be rendered.

The artist then traces the original drawing onto the black panel and carefully works into the black with micro-thin lines, using either a straight edge or a freehand stroke.

Mistakes can be rectified by re-inking the area and then lightly working back into the white chalk undercoat. The process is time- consuming.

Another scratchboard technique is that of simulating a woodcut or woodblock print or a fine steel engraving.

The procedure for achieving a woodcut effect is a step-by-step approach on the white ground, blacking in only small areas that are to be scratched with lines in such a manner as to represent cuts made with a chisel or knife on the wood block.

Pia's scratchboards are extremely delicate drawings that demonstrate a thorough understanding of her subject.

In her drawing of a Bengal tiger, "Capushsky," we see the delicate play of lights against darks, the contrast of textures and the expression of mixed caution and trust in the animal.

A small scratchboard picture of a baby leopard approaching its first birthday makes the animal seem soft through thousands of fine lines that make up the cat-like fur.

Pia has portrayed birds in flight, fleeing and hovering above their nest. Each is a completely detailed study of the patterns and designs of the wings and body feathers, arranged as carefully as a well-planned abstract design.

An owl print is an outstanding pose of the bird. Its dark eyes appear to see all and yet hesitatingly accept what they see on the surface.

Pia, who turned to studies of wildlife in gratitude for her return from failing health and a series of family tragedies, got her early art training in the form of fashion drawing in Paris under the tutelage of Christian Dior in 1957. Her knowledge of design is apparent in her work now.

Many of her works are studies of the birds and animals seen in zoos or on wildlife reserves. But, in some instances, they are products of her imagination, such as Pegasus and the Unicorn, both portrayed as handsome animals that might have been models for animated figures on a children's carousel.

A life-like study of a falcon, stretching for a landing with extended claws, appears to create motion within the compostion. The bird's huge wings open like a fan of feathers, compressing the air below it.

Several drawings of seagulls and pelicans with particular reference to the American Black Pelican have been selected for display in the U.S. Congress and one hangs in the White House.

Pia, a vibrant, lively small woman is continuously excited about life and her work. She speaks with a decided accent and is as colorful as her art.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A one-year exhibition, retrospective of 30 years of Robert McCall's art, is now at the Smithsonian in Washington.

McCall's space paintings, murals and illustrations depict fantasy cities of the future, visits to imaginary space stations, and beams aboard the starship Enterprise.

The 48 paintings on exhibit document the early years of the American and Soviet space programs.

A native of columbus, Ohio, McCall attended the Columbus School of Fine Art. After serving with the Army Air Forces in World War II, he became a freelance illustrator for the Saturday Evening Post. In 1948, he became involved with the space program and since has attended every major launch.

Video 'War' Gets 3rd Entry

By TONY KISS
Staff Writer

Another fighter has climbed into the ring for what we're calling the Great Music Video War.

In this corner: Music Television or MTV, the country's first — and currently only — 24-hour cable video music channel.

In the other corner: Several new video music channels, all scrambling for a slice of the video pie now owned by MTV.

At stake: Lots of big advertising bucks and a chance to help determine which recording artists will make it big.

As video music fanatics know, MTV has had the market virtually to itself since it first hit the cable airwaves three years ago.

The format is simple — a non-stop barrage of popular rock video clips, aimed at a young (13-34) audience, broadcast in stereo.

It took a while for MTV to catch on — it only recently went into the black — but it is now a very powerful force in selling records.

Although MTV is hardly the only service that's broadcasting music videos, it does has a few very big advantages; it's the only one on the air 24 hours a day in stereo — and it has signed exclusivity agreements with several big recording companies.

Basically, that means MTV gets first crack at broadcasting many hot new music videos.

Here's where the Great Music Video War starts to shape up.

A few weeks back (as we reported in this space), cable TV mogul Ted Turner announced that he would launch a new 24-hour cable music channel later this year.

This new channel will bow at noon on Oct. 26 and will be aimed at a slightly older audience.

MTV is also planning a second cable music channel for slightly older viewers (25-49) and vows to have this new service on the satellite by Jan. 1.

Now, there's word of a third 24-hour cable music channel: Discovery Music Network.

This new channel, set to debut on Dec. 31 with a televised New Year's Eve bash, will run a wide variety of music videos including rock, crossover rhythm and blues, country and oldies.

It will also air "extensive original programming" rather than just rely on videos, it promised via a press release this week.

The people behind Discovery (who also came up with Financial News Network) are planning a $2 million headquarters in L.A. and will use a new system to broadcast its sound (no word yet on exactly how they'll do that).

One more note: Discovery Music has also filed suit against MTV over its exclusivity deal with the record lables.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in L.A., claims that MTV is violating the Sherman and Clayton Acts by "forcing the record companies" to sign the deals.

The deals have "stified competition" and force the record companies into arrangements "that are not in (their) best interest," it said in a second press release.

We'll pass along more details on this matter as they develop.

VideoNews

In other video news this week:

☐ If Elvis Presley was still alive today, he'd be 50 years old come January — and to celebrate his birthday, Home Box Office is planning a special on The King.

The show called "Elvis: One Night With You" was taped in 1968 and marked Presley's return to the tube. The concert will make its HBO debut in January.

☐ Asheville's new independent television station, WHNS-TV/Channel 21, has rearranged its program lineup for the new fall TV season.

Although much of its Monday-Friday daytime schedule will stay the same, Channel 21 has added two vintage sitcoms: "I Love Lucy" and "The Real McCoys."

Channel 21 has also bumped its very popular "Star Trek" back to 5 p.m. and dropped four sitcoms into the 6-8 p.m. timeslot: "Archi Bunker's Place," "Too Close For Comfort," "Benson" and "WKRP in Cincinati."

The station has added "Bizarre" with John Byner at 11:30 p.m., pushed "Twilight Zone" back to midnight and is running "The Fugitive" at 12:30 a.m. weeknights.

And on weekends, the station is broadcasting "The Wild, Wild West" and two new video music shows — "This Week's Music" (which will run at 10 p.m. Saturdays) and "Puttin' On the Hits" (which goes on at 6:30 p.m. Sundays).

☐ Look for a new video by Jermaine Jackson to start showing up in movie theaters next month.

The clip is "Dynamite" and it will be unspooled a short subject before the main feature.

A number of videos are now getting this theatrical treatment under the title "Music Zap."

These "Zaps" are music videos transferred to 35 mm. film, with Dolby Stereo sountrack, we are told.

☐ Rock crooner Cyndi Lauper, who came out of nowhere this year with the smash album "She's So Unusual," will be interviewed this week on "Friday Night Videos" seen on the local NBC station, WYFF-TV/Channel 4, Greenville. The show is simulcast in stereo on WANS-FM/107 and WIMZ-FM/104.

The show also features new vidoes by Twisted Sister, Night Ranger and Tina Turner.

The show starts at 12:30 a.m. Saturday (or Friday night, depending on how you look at it).

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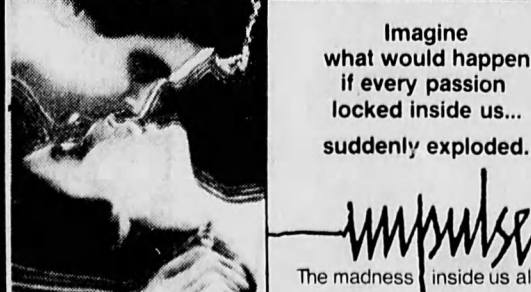

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